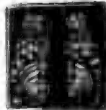


The Builder.

No. CCCLXXIX.

SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1850.



THE Royal Academy Exhibition, which was opened to the public on the 6th instant, is one of very great interest: an exhibition of such general goodness, indeed (with an exception to be noted) has perhaps never before been seen,—and the same remark will apply to the other current public exhibitions which have been reviewed by us as they opened. The Academy Exhibition consists of 1,456 works of art: more than 1,000 (some say 1,400) works were declined, and if we add to these, as we have done in former years, the number of those exhibited elsewhere, namely, at the British Institution, 500; the Suffolk-street Gallery, 735; the Portland Gallery, Regent-street, 373; the Water Colour Gallery, 380; the New Water Colour Gallery, 329; and allow for those returned by the British Institution and the Society of British Artists,—the total number produced during the year, for exhibition in the metropolis, will be found to be at least 5,500 works of art. During this time, too, artists have been turning out dioramas, panoramas, cycloramas, cosmoramas, &c. &c., without end, various panels in the Palace of Parliament have received their subjects, portrait painting has gone on, book illustrations have been multiplied, and the provincial exhibitions, although partly made up of works previously exhibited in London, have not been without their usual number of new contributions. Last year, the total number of works exhibited in the metropolis was 3,796; the number in 1848 was 4,023; but the number submitted to the various galleries was calculated on both these occasions at nearly the same as in the present year.

The exception to the satisfactory character of the exhibition generally is to be found in the room misnamed of "Architecture." The other sisters don't behave well to poor architecture, their elder, and have nearly succeeded in elbowing her out of house and home, although they will, perhaps, want her presently to provide a decent and fitting residence for themselves. Unfortunately, too, the collection of architectural works grows "small by degrees" without getting "beautifully less," many of those admitted having little to recommend them except fair drawing. In 1848 there were 113 architectural subjects; in 1849, 105; and now, out of 190 works which the room contains, there are but 87 which can even pretend to that title. What principle guided the hanging committee in their acceptance of architectural works for exhibition, and what was the character generally of those rejected, we cannot say, but we can assert of our own knowledge that several drawings were turned out which were fully entitled to be received. We are quite prepared to admit that it is, in a pecuniary point of view, of much more consequence to the painter that his picture should be hung than to the architect, and we can appreciate any efforts on the part of the council to afford this advantage to as many painters as possible: the extent of distress and anguish caused every year by rejection is

known only to few. Still, as the organ and advocate of architecture and the architectural profession, we cannot see this displacement going on without an earnest protest against it. Believing, as we do (and as we have often said), that the public exhibition of designs is an important means of improvement for the art, educating the public and stimulating architects, we must object to the additional space required for painting being obtained at the expense of this aid to architecture. More room is needed, and more room must be had.

Of the eighty-seven architectural works exhibited, one-third are representations of churches, mostly fair adaptations of ancient models, nicely drawn. Some of the buildings exhibited have been already illustrated in our pages, as, for example (1128), "St. Martin's Northern School, Castle-street, Long-acre," by Mr. Wild; (1130) "The City of London Workhouse," by Mr. Truss (as little like a workhouse as it is possible to conceive any thing); (1193) "The Small-pox Hospital," exhibited by Mr. Boyce; and "St. Aidan's Collage, Birkenhead," by Messrs. Wyatt and Brandon.

The last-named architects have also (1220) "View of the new Gateway at Deane Park, Northamptonshire," and (1274) "View of Trinity Church, St. Paneras," in course of erection.—Mr. Daukes exhibits (1117) "The Abbey Hotel, at Great Malvern," a large building, late Tudor in style; and (1229) and (1269) interior and exterior views of the proposed "Church of St. Thomas, Newport." The latter is of the Decorated period, and has a massive square tower, with open battlements and large turret at angle.—Mr. Ashpitel has made a nice drawing (1127) out of "Selections from Palladio," including the church of the *Redentore*, the *Palazzo Thiene*, the *Ponte Trionfale*, *Basilica at Vicenza*, &c., drawn to the same scale.—Mr. Angell, in 1166, "Palladiana," has carried the compilation further. (1185) "The Works of Vignola," by the same architect, is the drawing exhibited by him at the Institute in illustration of his paper on Vignola, printed in our columns. It includes the *Villa Papa Giulio*, the *Palazzo di Caprarola*, and the "Five Orders" according to this master's views.—Mr. Pugin has two or three small drawings, the principal of which is (1227) "St. Leonard's College Chapel," showing mainly the rood-screen.

Mr. Fergusson exhibits a drawing which will challenge criticism (1192), "A Design for a new National Gallery for Painting and Sculpture," a Greco-Italian building of large size and height, to occupy the site of the present building, and extend northwards as far as Hemming's-row.—Mr. Scott shows (in 1210) "A Restoration of the Chapter-house of Westminster Abbey." The frame includes a view of the—at present—desecrated Chapter-house, beautifully drawn, with four smaller drawings around it,—the entrance from the cloister; the eastern stalls, coloured; the inner entrance, and the vestibule.—Mr. P. C. Hardwick gives the "New Town Hall, Durham" (1196), with good open roof and fire-place; and (1226) "The New School and Master's House, Brington."

We shall look at the architectural drawings a little more in detail next week; and will now speak of a few of the principal pictures in the other rooms.

Amongst those who have contended most successfully in the arena of fame, and "whose laurels are but fresh upon him," is Mr. F. R. Pickersgill, A. Although his productions have ever been characterised by high qualities,

nothing he has hitherto done authorized a belief that so important an achievement was so soon to emanate from him, as (16) "Samson betrayed." The subject is admirably conceived throughout,—the Delilah powerful without being coarse,—and Samson a fine impersonation of torpid strength. Its chief charms, however, exist in the roundness and pulpy appearance of the flesh, and beautiful arrangement of colour in the draperies.

(15) "The disarming of Cupid," W. E. Frost, A., being contiguous to the above, looks hard and weak compared with the remembrance of the artist's singularly exquisite "Una," "Diana," and other pictures of former years. The great danger of this attractive and refined adaptation of nature, in conjunction with the highly beautiful "conventionale" of the antique, consists in the likelihood of imitating and repeating oneself; and, however unexceptionable these productions may be in every other respect, the absence of novelty goes farther towards weaning admirers than Mr. Frost seems aware of.

(39) "King Lear," act iv. scene 7, C. W. Cope, R.A., illustrative of the filial devotion of the misused Cordelia, affords ample scope for the poetical comprehension of the painter, and is executed in the honest, powerful manner that distinguishes him from the ephemeral twaddlers, who recognise handling as the soul of the art. Cordelia, in accordance with the text, bends in affectionate solicitude over her confiding and mistaken father, whilst he, the wreck of "every inch a king," reposes in childish helplessness. One can imagine the feeble beatings of his pulse, which the physician is so intently observant of, as he bids the musicians who are in attendance to awaken him, by their dulcet strains, to a recollection of himself.

(56) "The Grosse of Green Spectacles," D. MacIsaac, R.A., is a pendant to "Preparing Moses for the Fair," elaborated in the well-known style of MacIsaac; and if not equal to his best depictions, no other name could possibly be attached to it. (160) "The Spirit of Justice," an oil painting of the fresco in the House of Lords, is an allegory, embracing the leading points, and characteristic of the subject in a manner as evincive of high intellectual capacity as of cultivated taste and power. The embodiment of the "guilty one" is marvelously fine, and indeed throughout the performance the propriety of expression is wonderful.

(67) "Macbeth," act 1, scene 3, C. Stanfield, R.A., representing the meeting of the Thane of Cawdor with the weird sisters. Imaginative composition is not the forte of Mr. Stanfield: in the perfect delineation of reality, with much perception of what is most picturesque, and the ability of rendering truthfully the most difficult and transient effects, he excels supereminently. (131) "Scene on the Maas, near Dort—Market People waiting for the Evening Tide," is a remarkable instance of this: the luminous quality of the positively moving water, and the charming warm glow, so peculiar to the effect described, that pervades it, make it one of his most happy results.

Mr. Leslie, whose consummate knowledge of art and its appurtenances enables him to do wonders without appearing to be aware of it, contributes a lovely creation from the never-dying "History of a Foundling," (125) "Tom Jones showing to Sophia Western herself, as her best Security for his Good Behaviour." Without any of the artificial attractions, he at once arrests attention and excites admiration by his pure innate feeling for grace and unaffected notion of elegance and loveliness. We never saw a Sophy Western so completely agreeable to our ideas as this *ideal*. (136) "Scene from Henry VIII.," wherein the dying Katherine charges Capucius with a Letter commending her young Daughter to her Father's Goodness,—and a *piquante* (95) "Beatrice," are worthy this potentate of the pencil.

In a rendering of the often-repeated "Meeting of Jacob and Rachel" (92), Mr. Dyce, R.A., leaves an impression equal to the effect of anything in the collection. Influenced by his love for the severe, he has not extended it to that heterogeneous defiance of nature observable in younger disciples of the school: he has produced a perfect picture, and the manner of treatment, far from being suggestive of pedantry, is beautifully in unison with the subject, and implies an exalted sympathy with the feelings of former